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UNITED METHODIST POLITY AND DISCIPLINE – CL553 XL
ASBURY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
(2 Hours)

Fall 2003

Chris Bounds, Ph.D.

I. WELCOME

Hello, from the great state of Indiana! I extend a warm welcome to you and look forward to developing our relationship as we examine United Methodist Theology. I am amazed that I can lead this class in Marion, Indiana through Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky with you living somewhere else in the United States or world. Wow!

It is my privilege to serve as your guide on this ExL journey. When I took United Methodist Polity and Discipline in seminary, I must admit that I did not bring much enthusiasm to the course. Administration and organizational structure were not my great loves. However, through that class and seven years of pastoral ministry, I have found *The Discipline* to be an excellent resource and a trusted friend in ministry.

For example, at Sugar Hill United Methodist Church in Texarkana, Arkansas where I served as senior pastor before taking a teaching position at Indiana Wesleyan University, I inherited a congregation that desperately needed to expand their facilities. I had no experience in doing a building project and did not know exactly how to proceed. I immediately went to *The Discipline* and found a detailed step-by-step guide to follow, which was essential to me throughout the process. As a result, Sugar Hill now has cutting edge facilities in which to do enhanced ministry.

With your help and insights, we will deepen our understanding, as well as our appreciation, of United Methodist polity and will make connections to parish ministry.

At this point, I need to let you know that I have taught or led a class on the Internet. I have some experience, but I am by no means an expert. I know there may be times when my instructions and directions are unclear. Please do not hesitate to seek clarification and offer periodic feedback on how the class is going. We will be making our journey together.

II. COURSE DESCRIPTION

At Asbury Theological Seminary, there are four classes designed to meet the denominational requirements of The United Methodist Church for ordained ministry. They are The Theology of John Wesley, United Methodist History, United Methodist Doctrine; and this class CL 553 - United Methodist Polity.

The purpose of this class is to provide a thorough study of the polity and discipline of The United Methodist Church and to help participants meet the requirements for United Methodist ministry.

III. COURSE OBJECTIVES

As a result of this course, our class both individually and corporately will:

- (1) possess a working understanding of United Methodist church order and practice.
- (2) be able to administer or follow *The Discipline* as ordained clergy in a local United Methodist Church.
- (3) be acquainted with some of the representative issues presently confronting our United Methodist polity.
- (4) be able to recognize and appreciate the biblical, theological, and historical foundations for our denomination's structure.
- (5) be able to offer critique and vision for the future of United Methodist polity.

IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The success of our class is dependent on the timely completion of all assignments, in active participation in class discussion, and in building relationships with one another. During the semester we will be required to do the following for individual grades:

- (1) **Assigned Readings:** You will be responsible for all reading assignments specified in each module. Reading must be completed during the two - week period assigned in the syllabus. This will be key to your participation in your Team Folders and the Discussion Center. (10% of final grade)
- (2) **Research Paper:** You will select a topic from those covered during the semester and write an 8-10 page research paper (typed, doubled spaced) on that topic. The research paper will be due the last day of class. On questions of style with regard to paper organization and references, see Carole Slade, *Form and Style: Research Papers, Reports, Theses* (10th ed.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997). (30% of final grade)
- (3) **Exam:** You will be given an objective exam that will cover your knowledge of and ability to work with *The Discipline*. (30% of final grade)

(4) **Class Participation:** You will actively and thoughtfully participate as a member of a learning community. CL 553 is not an independent study. We will be interacting with and learning from one another. (30 % of final grade)

During the semester you are asked and encouraged to do the following:

(1) **Pray Daily for All Participants in Our Course:** I encourage you to pray for everyone in our class and for our ExL office. Please feel free to share prayer requests through out the semester. Know that I will pray daily for you individually and as a group.

(2) **Enjoy and Go Deeper:** God has given us the awesome ability to know each other and to know Him. This semester in our work, in our discussions, in our readings, and in our chats we will have an opportunity to deepen our connection to Christ and to deepen our relationship with each other.

V. ASSIGNED TEXTS

These textbooks may be obtained from the Asbury Theological Seminary's Cokesbury Bookstore. You may e-mail your request to exlbooks@asburyseminary.edu or call (859)-858-4242.

- *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, 2000.
- Frank, Thomas Edward. *Polity, Practice, and the Mission of The United Methodist Church*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000.
- Tuell, Jack M. *The Organization of the United Methodist Church*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000.

VI. COURSE OUTLINE

The following is a broad outline of the seven modules for the course. A detailed outline with specific instructions, assignments, and a complete list of assigned reading will be given at the beginning of each class module.

Our course will begin on Tuesday, September 2 at 12:00 noon (ET). On that Monday the first complete module will be accessible within the Course Center. A new module will be accessible every two weeks by 12:00 noon (ET) on the dates specified. Each module will close at 11:00 p.m. (ET) on the dates specified.

Module 01: Introduction, Historical Considerations, and The Constitution

- Module begins September 2 and ends September 15
- Assigned Reading:

The Book of Discipline 2000: Historical Statement and The Constitution (Part I). Polity, Practice, and the Mission of The United Methodist Church: Chapters 1 and 2.

Module 02: UM Doctrinal Standards, Theological Task, and Social Principles

- Module begins September 16 and ends September 29.

- Assigned Reading:

The Book of Discipline 2000: Doctrinal Standards and Our Theological Task (Part II), Social Principles (Part IV).

Polity, Practice, and the Mission of The United Methodist Church: Chapters 3 and 4.

Module 03: The Ministry of All Christians and the Local Church

- Module begins September 30 and ends October 13.

- Assigned Reading:

The Book of Discipline 2000: The Ministry of All Christians (Part IV), The Local Church (Part V, Chapter One).

Polity, Practice, and the Mission of The United Methodist Church: Chapters 5 and 6.

Module 04: The Ministry of the Ordained

- Module begins October 14 and ends October 27.

- Assigned Reading:

The Book of Discipline 2000: The Ministry of the Ordained (Part V, Chapter Two).

Polity, Practice, and the Mission of The United Methodist Church: Chapter 7.

Module 05: The Superintendency and the Conferences

- Module begins October 28 and ends November 10.

- Assigned Readings:

The Book of Discipline 2000: The Superintendency (Part V, Chapter Three), The Conferences (Part V, Chapter Four).

Polity, Practice, and the Mission of The United Methodist Church: Chapters 8 and 9.

Module 06: The General Agencies and Church Property

- Module begins November 11 and ends November 24.

- Assigned Readings:
The Book of Discipline 2000: Administrative Order (Part V, Chapter 5), Church Property (Part V, Chapter 6).
Polity, Practice, and the Mission of The United Methodist Church: Chapters 10 and 11.

Module 07: Judicial Administration and Conclusion

- Module begins November 25 and ends December 10.
- Assigned Readings:
The Book of Discipline 2000: Judicial Administration (Part V, Chapter Seven).
Polity, Practice, and the Mission of The United Methodist Church: Chapters 12 and Conclusion.
- **Term paper due December 12.**

VII. GRADING

Asbury Theological Seminary uses the 4.00-point system for grading and evaluation. The grading system is:

A 4.00 Exceptional work: outstanding achievement of course objectives

A- 3.70

B+ 3.30 Good work: substantial achievement of course objectives

B 3.00

B- 2.70

C+ 2.30 Acceptable work: essential achievement of course objectives

C 2.00

C- 1.70

D+ 1.30 Marginal work: minimal or inadequate achievement of course objectives

D 1.00

D- 0.70

F 0.00 Unacceptable work: failure of course objectives

VIII. CONTACT AND INTERACTION WITH YOUR GUIDE

During the course of the semester, as your guide, I want to be available to you. Here are some of the ways you can depend on me to be there for you.

(1) As specified earlier, I will have all of your materials and assignments on-line by 12:00 noon (ET) at the starting date for each of our seven learning modules.

(2) I will respond to all of your messages on a first come first serve basis during my office hours on Saturday mornings between 10:00 – 12:00 (ET). I will also check my e-mail most weekdays in case of a question or an “urgent” message (simply write URGENT in caps in the subject line).

(3) If you can afford the phone call, I would be glad to talk to you in person or you can leave a voice mail with me at (765)-677-0972 and I will return your call.

(4) While I might not participate in all the discussions, I will monitor our group conversations and participate as needed.

(5) I will check in with you twice during the semester to see how you are doing individually and how you are feeling about this ExL experience.

(6) I will be praying for you and thinking of you as we study and grow together through this experience.

IX. WINDOWS AND ICONS

While you have been instructed in the use of the items in the CL 553 folder, I will review the their uses for this class.

The Course Center: The Course Center will contain a copy of the final official syllabus for our class as well as all our class modules.

The Discussion Center: The Discussion Center will be used for all group communications. Anytime you have a question or comment about the course, the modules, assignments, or anything else of interest to all of us you should post it to this place.

The CL 553 XL Office: The CL 553 XL Office is for private correspondence between you and me. Items you do not want to appear before your fellow participants or items you think may embarrass me need to be posted here.

The Archives Center: The Archive Center will be used for storing correspondence that has already been explored during the semester in the Discussion Center. This will be done after the completion of each module and at my discretion.

The Chat Center: The Chat Center is intended primarily for real-time interaction among participants. You can meet with other members to study, ask questions, or explore topics. None of the conversations in this location is ever saved.

The Resource Center: The Resource Center provides access to a number of specific tools available to all ExL participants. These include access to Asbury Theological Seminary's B. L. Fisher Library, the services in Estes Chapel, ExL Updates, Guidelines for Success, Helpful Hints, Interesting Links, a PowerPoint Viewer, and a Real Audio player.

Class Teams: Because some of our work throughout the semester will be done in teams, our class of 20 students will be grouped into 4 teams:

1. Team Methodists
2. Team Evangelicals
3. Team United Brethren
4. Team Anglicans

X. TECHNICAL AND LIBRARY SUPPORT

When you have questions about the technical and logistical aspects of this course, please consult a staff member on the campus of Asbury Theological Seminary. These staff members are unfailingly helpful, and I urge you to contact any of them if you need assistance. Here are some of the key personal and locations.

(1) **The ExL Program** at Asbury Theological Seminary
Kevin Osborn at exl_counselor@asburyseminary.edu

(2) **Technical Support** (for computer and software support):
Jared Porter at ExL_Support@asburyseminary.edu.

(3) **General and Reference Library Assistance:**
Hannah Kirsch at Hannah_Kirsch@asburyseminary.edu

(4) **Inter-Library Loan Assistance:**
Dorothy James at Dot_James@asburyseminary.edu

Obtaining Library Materials and Reference Assistance

Email: Ats_Reference@asburyseminary.edu

Toll-Free Reference Help Line: 1-866-454-2733

ExL students are encouraged to make use of local libraries, if possible. However, library services are always available to students through Asbury's B. L. Fisher Library. All requests for books and journal articles should be e-mailed to the Reference Desk (ATS_Reference@asburyseminary.edu). The Reference

workers (Hannah, Robbie, and Nina) will also assist ExL students with reference requests, using various online databases, or doing research on a specific topic.

To request material from the B.L. Fisher Library, begin by searching the library catalog (for books available in the library) or one of the restricted journal databases available on the library's website (www.asburyseminary.edu/library - choose "library catalog" or "restricted databases"). Then send an email to the reference desk citing the sources that you would like to request. If you need help searching the databases, do not hesitate to call (1-866-454-2733) or email the reference desk. Students who live within a 50 mile radius of either the Florida or the Wilmore campus should come to campus to obtain their materials.

Please allow 5-10 business days for all requests to be filled. ExL students are billed for the cost of photocopies (5 cents per page); however, shipping via media rate is free. (Media rate normally takes 5 business days for shipping, but it can take two weeks to addresses in the West). Express mail services (prices vary according to weight) and scanning (10 cents per page in pdf format) are also available. Requests generally require 1-2 business days to be processed. Plan ahead and make your requests early enough to allow for shipping and processing!

Questions relating to the syllabus or course assignments should be directed to me in the CL 553 XL Office (open only to me) or the CL 553 XL Discussion Center (open to me and to all the members of the class). Sometimes, a sentence that is clear to me might not be clear to you. If something in the course is not working, let me know as soon as possible. I desire to make this internet course as helpful to you as possible.

Grace and Peace,
Chris